



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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The U. S. Government's thriving fur business on the Pribilof Islands will receive added impetus immediately after the war when a program will be started to improve the breed of Arctic blue foxes which roam the Island, Dr. Ira N. Gabrielsen, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior, said today.

Primary business on the Pribilofs is management of the great fur seal herd, now worth about \$10,000,000, which includes 85 percent of such seals in the world. A substantial amount of additional income for the U.S. Treasury has been brought in, however, from the skins of the handsome blue foxes which are also natives of the islands.

The blue fox is a color phase of the white Arctic fox and is found on many of the Aleutian islands as well as on the Pribilofs. The latter islands are ideal for raising foxes since no natural enemies are present and the islands are too far from the mainland for eagles to reach the young foxes. Also no fencing or impoundment is needed since the foxes cannot escape from the islands, except in early spring when some are carried off each year as the ice breaks away.

In the past the foxes have been taken with little regard for keeping up the breed; thus most of the largest and handsomest males have been removed from the breeding stock.

When the taking of foxes is resumed it is planned to leave a number of the finer specimens on the islands. It is also possible that blue foxes from the Aleutians, Greenland, or elsewhere will be brought in to improve the softness of the fur.

So far just under a million dollars has been paid into the Treasury as a result of the sale of Pribilof islands fox skins.